

## DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS' EMPLOYEES' NEWSLETTER

### LEGISLATURE MULLING HIGHWAY PROGRAM, BUDGET DEFICIT

The Special Legislative Session is on the minds of many. As the *Interchange* went to press in late June, no decision had yet been made on a proposal that could have long-ranging effects on the Highway Program.

Realization that state income was not keeping pace with expenses led the Governor to call for a special session of the Legislature. It began June 16.

Reorganization of the Highway Department's finances is a central portion of the Governor's proposal to balance the budget. The proposal is now before the Legislature.

Mineral royalties and coal tax funds previously committed to the Highway Program would be transferred to the state's general fund. To replace these funds, the Governor proposes an increase in motor fuels taxes of 5¢ for gas and 3¢ for diesel.

The other part of the Governor's proposal involves restructuring outstanding highway revenue bonds and issuing additional bonds. This would allow the Department to continue the Reconstruction Trust Fund Program — the RTF — through the early 1990s.

The RTF authorizes the Department to spend up to \$40 million per year in state funds to rebuild or repair primary highways. In effect, this doubles the amount of work on the roads that serve most Montanans — roads that haven't had proper attention since the 1930s.

If the Legislature accepts the Governor's proposal, the program will continue. Without a commitment to funding, it will be reduced to a lower level, or stall.

Support for the Highway Program has been good, but the tight budget has cast a shadow over many state programs, including highways. Vacant positions are not being filled in many cases and, once again, layoffs are possible.

In presentations to legislators and at meetings around the state, Director Wicks has pointed out that Montana needs a first-class system of roads to carry us into the next century. If the program is delayed now, he said, it likely won't be ready again in time to meet the pressing needs of the future.



*MERT SHERLOCK has been in the communications business for over 40 years.*

### "MERT" COMMUNICATES FOR HIGHWAYS

Webster defines a dedicated person as "one who is devoted to a cause, ideal, or purpose." The Montana Department of Highways could define it as Emily "Mert" Sherlock.

Mert has been in the communication business for over 40 years. Her career began in 1945 as a telephone operator for the Western Union Telegraph Company. She worked there for 27 years, becoming Manager of Helena's Office, until Western Union phased out the Capitol City's branch in 1972.

But Mert's interest in the field didn't stop. The lifelong East Helena native was back at it by 1973, taking her knowledge and experience to the Communications Section of the Montana Highway Department. Thirteen years later she is still going strong with no sign of letting up.

Why does this grandmother of three love the communication field? "Once I got that printer's ink in my blood I never wanted to leave. It is really exciting; you know what is going on and you have to make sure the message gets to its place."

"Mert's dedication and dependability are her most valuable assets," Communications Section Supervisor Ron Haraseth explains. "When there is a storm, I don't worry. I know Mert will be there to take care of things."

Information Manager Dennis Unsworth adds that Mert's attitude is also important. "Her rapport with other maintenance and communications employees is a plus. If there is a problem, Mert talks with those involved and works it out," Unsworth said.

Mert spends a major portion of her work day operating the Department's computer message system. She uses the computer to retrieve and send messages to and from Highway Divisions throughout Montana. Once a message is received, she distributes the information to numerous units and bureaus within the Highway Department.

Mert also runs the state radio for the Helena area. Maintenance workers report road conditions for a hundred-mile radius of Helena. Mert evaluates the information, writes a report, and records it so the public can call to receive road information. Hundreds of callers use the service each day and several radio stations play the report throughout the day.

*(Continued on back page)*

## FOAMIX PROJECT ONE-OF-A-KIND

"You're doing what?" That's the reaction Don Harriott gets each time he describes the experimental "foamed-mix" project recently completed by the Department of Highways on I-90 southeast of Billings. Harriott, Administrator of the Engineering Division, is in many ways responsible for the innovative project.

Foamed asphalt mixtures have been around since the mid-50s, according to Harriott, but a foamed-mix project of this scale has never been tried before.

"The beauty of this job," Harriott said, "is that we were able to save a lot of money. We combined our knowledge of construction practices with native materials, naturally occurring materials in the area, and got something that will perform well."

The original design for the project called for a full-depth asphalt plant mix base with an asphalt membrane to keep moisture from the swelling soils which are always a problem in the area. Nearby coal strip-miners have to take the difficult swelling clays into account in their reclamation plans. Road builders are often frustrated by the material.

*(Continued on back page)*

## NEWS FROM MISSOULA

by Bonnie Sedita

The staff in the Missoula district would like to thank everyone who participated in the Annual Bowling Tournament held May 3 and 4 in Missoula. Two hundred and thirty people participated in the bowling events and one hundred and sixty dined and danced.

No one ever realizes the dedication and time put forth on this event until they volunteer. A very special thanks to Vic Schatz and Jerry Tahija for all the long, hard hours spent on this event. Thanks guys!

The first place winners, their scores and awards are as follows:

### WOMEN'S

Team: For the Hell of It—Helena	(2950)	\$250.00
Doubles: Barb Barrett & Pat Johnson—Helena	(1268)	\$125.00
Singles: Judy Aakre—Shelby	(695)	\$ 70.00
All Events: Shirley Slaybaugh—Kalispell	(1990)	\$ 20.00
High Scratch Game: Vickie Eggum—Missoula	(224)	Trophy
High Scratch Series: Thelma Willems—Helena	(568)	Trophy

### MEN'S

Team: Northside Steambath—Great Falls	(3111)	\$300.00
Doubles: Gus Trobbe & Jim Short—Kalispell	(1324)	\$150.00
Singles: Jim Short—Kalispell	(730)	\$100.00
All Events: Jim Short—Kalispell	(1986)	\$ 25.00
High Scratch Game: Jim Short—Kalispell	(260)	Trophy
High Scratch Series: Jim Short—Kalispell	(613)	Trophy

We ask your assistance with a tax deductible donation for the Heather McChesney Fund to restore Heather's life to a normal childhood. Heather is the seven year old daughter of Bill McChesney, a fourteen year employee of the Department and currently Field Maintenance Supervisor at Evaro in the Missoula Division. Heather was born with biliary atresia, a disease that progressively destroys the liver. She is now very much in need of a transplant and is on the "active" list for a liver transplant at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha.

Please send donations to "The Heather McChesney Fund," First Security Bank, P.O. Box 4506, Missoula, Montana, 59806.



**EXPANDED FLEET**—Jon Gates is shown here with the first of an expanded fleet of GVW vehicles. High-performance packages were substituted for the usual law enforcement "pursuit" package, with the substantial savings used to purchase more cars. In turn, this will help the Enforcement Bureau meet its goal of devoting 25% of the overall effort to roving enforcement.

Even without the costly "pursuit" package, GVW is quite pleased with the performance of the new, front-wheel drive vehicles.

## GLENDIVE BUSY WITH CONCRETE

by Patty Zimmerman

Work has begun on Montana's first concrete overlay project. The project is on I-94 from about one mile west of Glendive to three miles east of Glendive, a total of 7.9 miles of overlay. The seven million dollar project entails placing eight inches of concrete over existing asphalt. Preliminary work began the first part of April and is expected to be complete and open to the public around the first of November.

The project requires huge amounts of concrete. The prime contractor, Progressive Contractors, Inc. of Minnesota, will be using a double drum batch plant that will produce 350 yards of concrete per hour. This in turn will require 1,100 tons of cement a day.



## IT'S NEW

Something new has been added! In response to requests for more personnel news, we've included this insert page strictly for news and pictures of YOU! Please send us slides or negatives of your activities (no prints, please), or let us know of upcoming events. Here is a special invitation to the District offices: Keep us informed — we want to hear from you!

WET—Debbie Olson (right) observes. NTW runner Bill Taliaferro crosses the finish line.



### NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION WEEK RACE

Rain coats, not running gear, were the order of the day for the National Transportation Week race May 13 in Helena. Despite cold winds and rain, over fifty runners splashed to the finish line in three separate races. Gary Park won the 10 km race, with Tim Cail and Marty Beatty in second and third places. The winner of the 5 km race was 16-year-old Corey Hill, son of Mary Hill, followed by Charles Pierce and Hank Whitaker. Myron Wilson was the fastest in the one-mile walk/run with Anna Miller and Abbey Hyatt placing second and third. Special thanks to Marty Beatty, Bill Dunbar, Jo Eschler, Doug Morgan and Bob Tholt, who organized everything so well (except the weather)!

## RETIREMENTS

Employees who have recently retired with over 30 years of service with the Department include: Lewis Nelson, Grass Range, 32 years, 8 months; George Sitton, Livingston, 32 years, 1 month; Sam Rouillier, St. Ignatius, 31 years, 11 months; Ken Davis, Helena, 30 years, 5 months; and Merlyn Johnson, Butte, 30 years, 2 months.

Recent retirees with 20 to 30 years service include: Stanley Newton, Billings, 29 years, 10 months; Charles Strong, Lewistown, 29 years, 2 months; Richard Hobby, Billings, 28 years, 1 month; Eugene Keil, Nashua, 24 years, 6 months; Harvey Frederick, Corvallis, 23 years, 1 month.

Other employees who have recently retired include: Joseph Beck, Drummond, 19 years, 1 month; Harold Fahrenbruck, Forsyth, 16 years, 10 months; John Henen, Dutton, 14 years, 9 months; Homer Pulse, Glendive, 10 years, 6 months; Joseph Antonietti, Butte, 7 years, 7 months; and June Thompson, Helena, 7 years, 1 month.



## NEW EMPLOYEES

Welcome to our newest employees! **Billings:** Kimberly Lloyd; Dick Toavs; Roy Ventura. **Bozeman:** James Koch. **Butte:** Richard Du-laney. **Glendive:** David Brownlee; Dennis Doll; Michael Lynch; Roger Warner. **Great Falls:** Lennart Carlson; Teresa Lindley; Kelly Manzer. **Havre:** John Tatsey. **Helena:** Kent Barnes; Raymond Brown; Paul Ferry; Gregory Hofman; David Jensen; Larry Johns; David Johnson; Leonard Linch; Nich Mildragovich; Stanley Miller; Rosemarie Miner; Wayne Nelson; Samuel Prestipino; Alvin Stocker; Louise Stoner; Karen Wynne. **Missoula:** Scott Amundson; Richard Bouldin; Susan Colyer; Donald Rasmussen; Dean Sackett; Daniel Sullivan; Lowell Trusty.



Nationally, the lives of more than 400 motorists have been saved in states with seat belt use laws in effect, according to Traffic Safety Now, Inc., a non-profit organization supporting the passage of state seat belt use laws.

The group says the drop in death rates in New York, Michigan, New Jersey and Illinois reverses a national trend towards more traffic deaths, which are generally rising in 1985.



**BIG FINISH**—Anna Miller and Denis Burke (above left) enjoyed the NTW Race in spite of the weather.



Public opinion surveys in many large metropolitan areas, such as Houston, Washington, Denver and New York have indicated that traffic congestion has superseded crime, housing and pollution as the number one concern.

## SERVICE AWARDS

Service awards were presented in the last six months to:

**40 years:** Robert R. Lamb

**35 years:** Robert Strainer, Richard Miller, Frank Verbanac

**30 years:** Merlyn Johnson, Lester Sodja, Robert Crants, Neale Sikveland, Jack Silvey, John Sprunger, Harry Strobbe, Ed Wilson, Joseph Bettie, David Cook, Marx Kemmer, Harold Wiebe, Paul Aicher, Keith Benson, J. C. Clemmer, Marvin Ross, James R. Williams

**25 years:** Gerald Fagan, Raymond Swanson, Arthur Anderson, Donald Anderson, Norman Hobby, Robert Rask, William Shuyler, Donald Stewart, Jerry Branum, Jack Liedle, Ole Olson, James Phelps, Murray Swenson, Lewis Harrell, Kenneth Baisch, William Maart, Eugene R. Piedalue

**20 years:** James Cloninger, Gary Dillree, Eugene Hanson, James O'Donnell, Rodney Phillips, Irvin Yost, Donald F. Hinman, Ronald Williams, Marvin Holmquist, Carl Peil, Melvin Stocker, Myron Tucker, Hoyt Dubois, Larry Johnson, Clifford Kirby, Tony Lanch, Edward Reuterdaahl, Darrell Daw, Alfred Mann, William Steyh

**15 years:** Michael Wright, Bradley Bruce, Frank Moore, Marvin Rau, Jack Siemens, David Adams, Obert Dalby, Charles Bauman, Keith McFarlane, Nancy Stephens

**10 years:** Kenneth Broere, Robert Bukvich, Cecil Stocks, Leon Elbert, Larry Floerchinger, Lowell Hallock, Ted Higgins, David Sereday, George Trask, William Cloud, Larry Dassinger, Frank Jaconetty, Russell McDonald, John Starcevich, Randy Aafedt, Mark Beckedahl, Gerald Brown, Robert Castleberry, Mark Leighton, Jerry Lynch, Robert O'Connor, Karl Pula, Thaddeus Rowland, Sally Ann Russell, Janice Schutt, Rosalie Swoboda, Charles Walt, David Hayden, Ray Lagge, John McKinney, Chester Reistad, George Stanich, Larry Talseth, Joe Vigus, Patrick Wall

**5 years:** Wendy Anderson, Mary Ann Bahn-miller, Peggy Cummings, Dorothy Morrison, Mark Petersen, Scott Reesman, Donald Tamietti, Gary Wicks, Dennis Wilson, Randy Davies, Jerry Gutowsky, Paul Hamper, Terrance O'Boyle, Charles Olson, Raymond Petersen, Gary Thielen, Daniel Gravage, James Koch, Kenneth Lambeth, David Peters, Frederick Bente, Dennis Dietrich, Dan John Mitchell, Mark Moberley, Larry Schwarz, David Sigmundstad, Lonny Anderson, Allen Baier, Dale Johnson, Roger Schultz

## TRANSFERS SINCE JANUARY 1, 1986

**Billings:** Paul Bronson and Richard Wegner to Maintenance. **Butte:** Ann Shea and Robert Henry to Construction. **Glendive:** Alan McRae to Equipment. **Helena:** Pamela Aldridge, Planning and Statistics; Carolyn Chaussee, Information Unit; Margaret Hall, GVW; Mary Beth Henne, Program Development; Jack Liedle, Materials; Gary Park, Right-of-Way; Bruce Parker, Bridge; Mary Ryan, Motor Pool; R. Brad Sanders, Accounting. **Miles City:** Douglas Moeller to Maintenance.



## BIG "I" WORK IN BUTTE

by Karen Ham

Besides construction on primary and secondary road systems, there is \$47.2 million worth of work in progress on the interstate system in the Butte area.

Construction is still in progress between Bernice and Buxton — a total of 34.1 miles.

On the interstates through Butte, I-90 and I-15, concrete rehabilitation has begun and traffic has been detoured to the eastbound lane. All exits to the city with the exception of the City Center exit west of Butte are open. The City Center exit, which is one of the few left turn exits on the interstate in the USA, is closed because of problems with the left turn movement during construction.

Fortunately, the closure does not impair access to the city. There are three other interchanges available to travelers who wish to stop in Butte.

To those who do not wish to stop in Butte, reduced speed through the nine mile construction zone will add only about five minutes to their trip.

All of this work is expected to be completed this construction season.

Later this year, the Pipe Organ Slide project will go to contract. This will represent a milestone for the State and for Les Sodja of the Consultant Design Section. Les has been a part of the State's interstate program since its inception and will be proud to see the job constructed. Completion of the Pipe Organ project will represent the end of the interstate construction program in Montana.

Congratulations go out to the following people:

Casey Ballard who moved from Survey Aide II to Lab Tech. II in Butte.

George Sitton retired February 28 and Les Saunders is acting Project Manager in his place.

Paul Aicher retires June 13.



## EQUIPMENT TRIVIA

In 1985, the Highway equipment fleet traveled over 15 million miles, according to Bruce Barrett, Chief of the Equipment Bureau.

Most of the travel was in pickups, although three ton plow trucks logged nearly as many miles.

Plows logged three times as many miles as passenger cars!

"We are obviously a mobile organization," Barrett said. Not included in these figures are about three million miles logged on the Department's Motor Pool vehicles.

Following are the numbers Barrett supplied for the *Interchange*.

1/2 and 3/4 ton pickups	5,232,429 miles
3 ton plow trucks	4,944,577 miles
Passenger cars	1,459,620 miles
Vans	861,839 miles
Utility vehicles	666,014 miles
Suburbans	569,063 miles

## WELL DONE

Amongst the usual mail over the winter were letters thanking crews from the Kalispell and Lolo Pass areas for dedication to their jobs. The Kalispell workers were commended by District 120 Highway Patrolmen for "their outstanding cooperation in assisting us this winter with the many occasions of adverse road conditions and unpredictable call-out times." The letter went on to say, "their dedication to their job and the safety of people on the highways. . . has saved many persons from ill-fated accidents in the valley."

A letter was also received thanking the Lolo Pass crew "for a job of road maintenance that was superb." The letter writer volunteered, "I know you catch a lot of flack when things aren't to some motorist's satisfaction and you probably hear about it."

These letters are just examples of comments that are, by and large, very complimentary of the job done by maintenance crews. Montana's mountainous terrain, windswept valleys and unpredictable weather offer special challenges to our road crews. We're all proud of a "job well done!"

## HIGH-FLOAT WORKING IN BILLINGS DISTRICT

by Kelly Nelson

Hundreds of miles of Montana roads will get a chip-seal coat this summer as part of the preventive maintenance program begun in 1982. The program is intended to extend the life of good roads by resealing them to keep water out.

Because it's a new program, there have been some experimentation and a handful of failures with the program. One promising aspect of the program, though, is use of high-float emulsion.

Maintenance Superintendent Bob Chapman from Lewistown remarks that he appreciates the advantages found when working with this oil. A seal and cover job was done on a section of road east of Lavina on US 12 last summer with great success.

"The asphalt is easier to work with," Chapman said, since the chips do not have to be applied immediately after "shooting" the oil. It is also cheaper, he said, because the chips do not have to be such top quality to adhere to this type of oil.

A high-float emulsion sealcoat workshop was presented May 21 by Koch Asphalt Company at the Yogo Inn in Lewistown. Forty to fifty Department employees from all over the state attended.

According to the representative from Koch Asphalt, it was a "show and tell" presentation, with a two-hour slide presentation followed by a question and answer period. A buffet lunch was served by Koch Asphalt, and then a demonstration was given, as maintenance crews applied the new oil and chips north of Grassrange on MT 19.

## HOW SAFE IS YOUR VEHICLE?

Listed below are various motor vehicles you may drive or ride. The percentage figure beside each vehicle is the chance each occupant of that vehicle had of being killed or injured due to a crash with another motor vehicle in 1984.

Moped	95%
Motorcycle	86%
Farm Vehicle	86%
Recreational Vehicle	35%
Truck Tractor	33%
School Bus	31%
Straight Truck	30%
Automobile	30%
Truck Tractor W/Trailer	29%
Panel/Van/Pickup	29%
Tow/Maintenance/	
Construction Vehicle	26%
Motor Home	26%
Bus	22%

## (FOAMIX - cont.)

Just as important, good quality aggregate (gravel) is scarce. A value engineering (VE) team formed in 1981 looked at a dozen combinations of asphalts and pavement thickness for the I-90 project. They found that aggregate would have to be hauled an average of 40 miles, but the availability of sands in the right-of-way, or just outside it, suggested to the team that it may be an ideal place to try foamed asphalt on a large scale.

"You don't build a brick house in a forest or a log cabin in a desert," Harriott said. "From an engineering perspective, we found native sand and foamed asphalt were a viable alternative."

Early foamed asphalt was created with steam. In 1968, Mobil of Australia obtained the patent rights from Professor Csanyi of Iowa State University. Mobil developed and simplified the process and patented it under the name FOAMIX. It later granted U.S. marketing rights to Conoco. Modern FOAMIX uses water to cause hot asphalt to foam, increasing volume by 8 to 15 times. It was this process that made the use of sand a feasible alternative.

Surprises?

"We expected a dark brown or black mixture," Harriott said, "but the color of the parent material (sand) didn't change at all. It looks like wet sand."

Another surprise came as the contractors gained more experience while "learning on the run." The pug mills (mixing chambers) set up for the project were up to 10 feet long, according to Harriott. "We found that asphalt mixing and dispersion occurred in the first three feet of the mill. From there on out, the extra milling didn't do much more to disperse the asphalt."

The I-90 project is the largest application of foamed asphalt ever undertaken — anywhere. Twenty-three miles of four lane interstate construction was dedicated October 10, 1985. The heart of the project is the 9-inch FOAMIX base course, a bold step for the Department and the individuals involved, but one they're becoming more confident with.

"One problem with experimental projects," explained Bob Rask, head of the Materials Bureau's Physical Testing Section, "is they're too short. If this would have been just a short section, we may have quit after the early problems we had."

They didn't quit, and in mid-June last year the Department was ready to "show the world". Most of the bugs were worked out and 200,000 tons of the foamed mix had been put down, according to Rask.

In October, the project was complete and officials from Montana and Wyoming met at the border to open the last interstate segment joining Billings, Montana and Sheridan, Wyoming.

It was cold and rainy that day. Winter came early and stayed late. By May of this year, numerous freeze and thaw cycles have worked on the new road. Still, no cracking is evident and engineers and maintenance chiefs are becoming more confident with their highway built on sand.

## MERT (from cover)

Often callers phone Mert to talk to the maintenance workers in the field. Mert uses a "phone patch" that connects the phone line to the radio. "It is quite useful because I don't have to relay the message for each end. It cuts out the middleman," she said.

Dedication and dependability are obvious when you consider Mert's schedule. She arrives at work at 5 a.m. From 5 to 6 she walks for exercise throughout the building. By 6:15 the spark-plug of a lady is gathering information for the road report. Her day officially begins at 6:30 and ends at 3 p.m.

Mert hasn't missed much work in the thirteen years she's been with the department. "Since I've been here I don't believe she has taken any sick leave other than the heart attack," says Haraseth. It occurred in 1981. Within two weeks she was back on the job, ready for action.

"The mile walk before work helps strengthen my heart," Mert said. "I also had to quit smoking. If Mert can quit smoking after 40 long years, anyone can," she says proudly.

Mert is organized; everything has its place. Messages and road reports are neatly filed and stored for seven years. Ask for a certain message or road report from the past and you will have it in your hands in minutes.

Under the glass plate on top of her desk are strategically placed cards with information on everything from what number to call in case of a forest fire to what the wind chill is at 40 below with 40 mph winds. Mert is prepared.

Mert enjoys her work and attributes much of her enjoyment to co-workers. Many people stop by the office just to say a quick hello during the day. "I really like and have fun with the people I work with. That is very important about how you feel toward your job," Mert said.

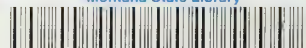
Of course, life isn't all work and no play. Mert loves to work with crafts and the talk of fishing puts a twinkle in her eye. Her three grandchildren also keep her busy with slumber parties at her house. The way she explains it, Grandma likes it as much as the kids.

Retirement? "I don't believe in it, want to discuss it, or plan on stopping," Mert said. The question did sound silly: what other answer would you expect?



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